

By Jonathan Allen

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As a whole, the Congressional Black Caucus is against the deal the president cut with Republicans on taxes.

But it's becoming more clear that's a consensus position, not a unanimous one.

Citing the needs of impoverished, unemployed and foreclosed-upon folks in his Philadelphia district, Democratic Rep. Chaka Fattah announced his backing of the proposal Monday afternoon.

"They cannot wait for the 'perfect' solution from an imperfect and divided Washington. President Obama's proposal to maintain unemployment benefits through 2011 and the soon-to-expire tax cuts through 2012 will provide that help," Fattah said in a statement. "The reality of the legislative process, and my commitment to working families, compels me to support the framework of this proposal in spite of its imperfections."

Fattah isn't the first member of the CBC to support the tax-and-unemployment-benefits package, but he is the most liberal. And his backing suggests that, regardless of its final form, the president's tax package won't die for lack of bipartisan support in the House.

His statement comes just a few days after CBC leaders held a Capitol press conference to announce that an overwhelming majority of the caucus opposes the president's plan.

It also was released as House leaders were discussing possible amendments to the agreement, including allowing a proposal to change the bill's estate tax provision from a 35 percent rate on wealth above \$5 million to a 45 percent rate on posthumous transfers of more than \$3.5 million.

Most House Democrats are also opposed to the deal's handling of individual income tax rates. Lower rates set during President George W. Bush's first term are set to expire on all income levels on Jan. 1. House liberals want to freeze rates for couples making below \$250,000 and individuals earning less than \$200,000 while letting them expire for workers who take in more money each year.

But the deal the president struck with congressional Republicans would freeze the rates on all income.

The Senate is slated to take a test vote — on whether to shut off debate on the plan — Monday afternoon.

Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.), another member of the CBC, said last week that he supports the deal, and two other black Georgians, Hank Johnson and David Scott, are said to be considering voting in favor of it — though neither has made a public statement.

But there appears to be enough support among a mix of Southern Democrats, New Democrats from high-income coastal districts, a handful of CBC members and even some progressives to push the deal through the House if it's raised on a straight, up-or-down vote.